

MLT Watershed Monitoring and Standards and Guidelines Report

Glasgow Field Station
2003



Introduction

The Missouri – Lonetree Watershed (MLT) is comprised of 286,000 acres of BLM – administered public lands as well as 75,000 acres of private and state lands in south Valley County, Montana. Land ownership is approximately 80% public administered by the BLM. The watershed is comprised of 14 livestock grazing allotments with seven permittees holding the 10-year term permits. There are currently seven allotment management plans covering this watershed.

The watershed level management program currently being used in the Glasgow Field Station is a result of decisions made in the Judith-Valley-Phillips Resource Management Plan (JVP-RMP) dated September 1994. Initial assessments of the riparian and upland areas of the MLT Watershed were conducted during the grazing seasons of 1995 and 1996. The MLT Watershed Plan was completed in July of 1999. This report is being done at this time as all of the riparian sites that were not meeting Standards and Guidelines during the initial assessment phase are now meeting Standards.

History

When the MLT Watershed Plan was completed it was determined during the evaluation phase that the uplands were meeting or exceeding the JVP-RMP requirement that 80% or more of the watershed was in good or excellent condition. In fact, 84% of the lands were meeting the standard. The watershed is currently meeting this standard as well.

A number of riparian reaches were not meeting standards. The list of those sites is included in the table below.

Stream	Allotment	Site	Score, Trend	Year
Sutherland Creek	4595	R-349	40 Non-functional, Static	1996
Plum Creek	4595	R-229	73 Functional-at-Risk, Static	1996
Larb Creek	4579	R-305	74 Functional-at-Risk, Static	1996
Lonetree Creek	4590	R-343	76 Functional-at-Risk, Up	1996
Square Creek	4595	R-262	67 Functional-at-Risk, Static	1995
Timber Creek	4588	R-2	67 Functional-at-Risk, Static	1996

In a joint effort to increase monitoring efficiency and raise permittee awareness the Glasgow Field Station collaborated with Dr. John Lacy to implement a monitoring program for the permittees in this watershed and the Badlands Cooperative State Grazing

District. To date, all of the permittees in this watershed are participating in the monitoring program.

Current Status

When the monitoring program was instituted, Dr. Lacey contracted with the Grazing District and the permittees to help them establish a monitoring program with the intention of training the permittees to continue monitoring on their own. The program has been very successful and is a significant factor in the progress that has been made in this watershed.

The BLM's monitoring policy stated that sites not meeting standards would be monitored every year. Sites that were meeting standards would be monitored every three years. The monitoring policy for all seven watersheds within the Glasgow Field Station's area of responsibility will be that, at a minimum, all sites not meeting standards will continue to be monitored yearly while sites that are meeting standards will continue to be monitored every three years. This policy will apply to BLM personnel as well as the permittees. All sites can be monitored more frequently if desired or needed by the BLM or the permittees.

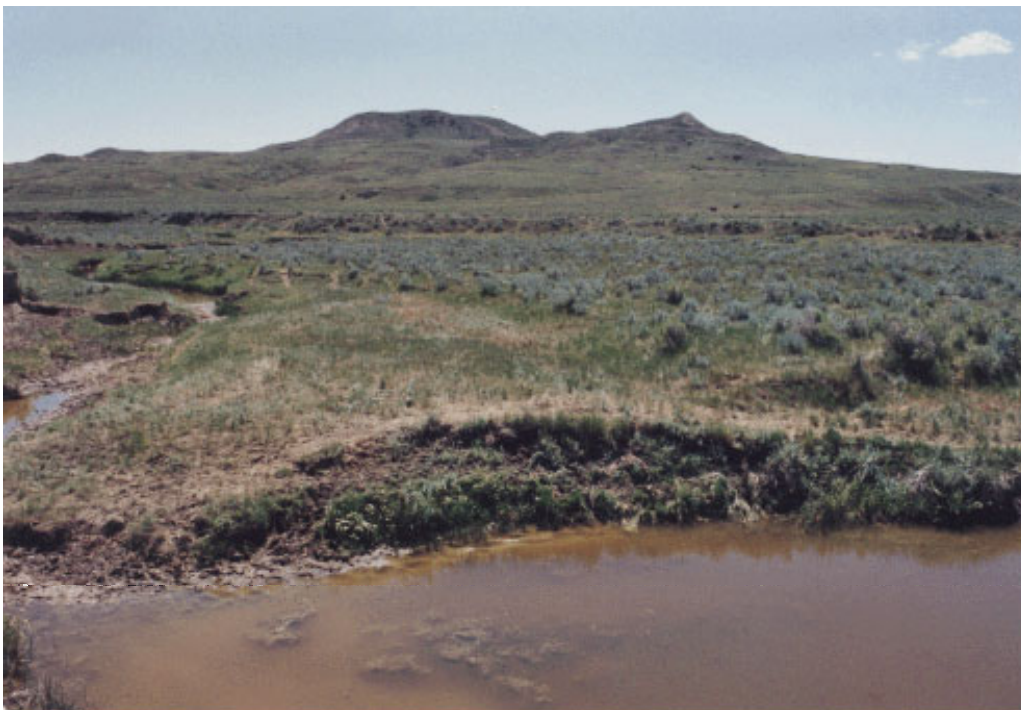
As stated earlier, all of the riparian sites that were not meeting standards during the initial evaluation phase are now meeting standards. The following table shows when each site met the standards and its score.

Stream	Allotment	Site	Score, Trend	Year
Sutherland Creek	4595	R-349	84 PFC	1999
Plum Creek	4595	R-229	89 PFC	1999
Larb Creek	4579	R-305		
Lonetree Creek	4590	R-343	91 PFC	1998
Square Creek	4595	R-262	81 PFC	1998
Timber Creek	4588	R-2	87 PFC	2001

The following pages will contain initial photos of the above listed sites and will contain more recent photos of each when they began meeting standards for comparison.



R-349 pictures taken in 1996 when the initial riparian assessment was done. Score of 40 Non-functional. Sutherland Creek.





R-349 pictures taken in 1999 when the site first met standards. Score of 84, PFC or Proper Functioning Condition. Sutherland Creek.





R-229 in 1996 when the initial riparian survey was done. Score of 73, Functional-at-risk, static trend. Plum Creek.



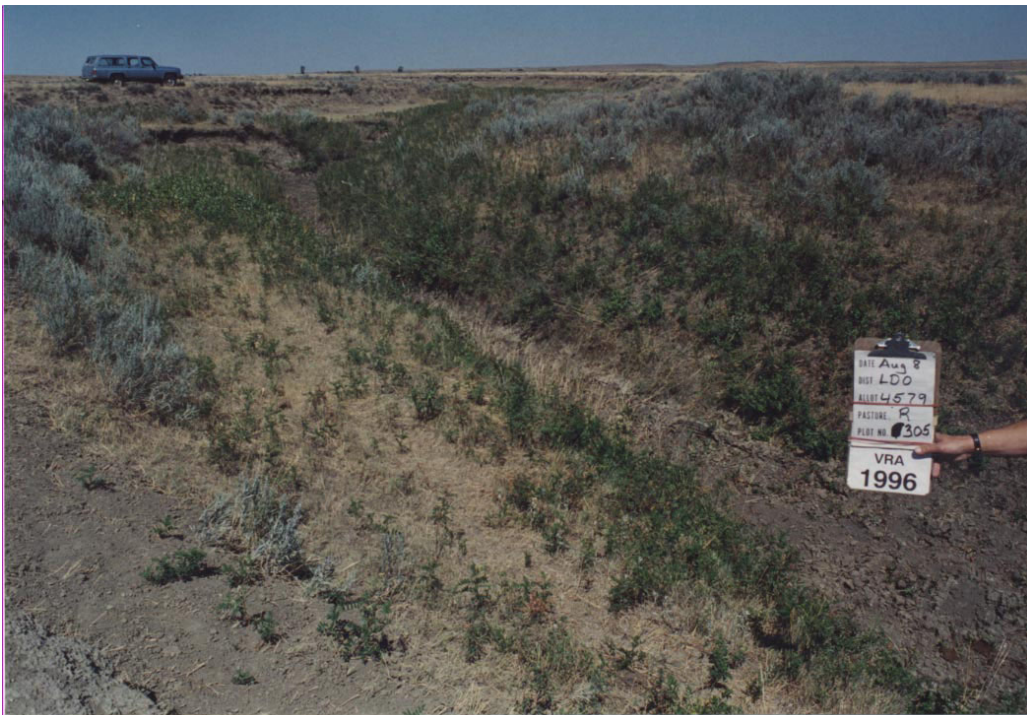


R-229 in 1999 when the site first met standards. Score of 89, PFC or Proper Functioning Condition. Plum Creek.





R-305 in 1996 when the initial riparian survey was done. Score 74, Functioning-at-risk, static trend. Larb Creek.





R-305 taken in 2002. Score of 91. PFC or Proper Functioning Condition. Larb Creek.





R-343 in 1996 when the initial riparian survey was done. Score 76, Functional-at-risk, upward trend. Lonetree Creek.





R-343 in 1998 when the site first met standards. Score 91, PFC or Proper Functioning Condition. Lonetree Creek.





R-262 in 1995 when the initial riparian survey was done. Score of 67, Functional-at-risk, static trend. Square Creek.





R-262 in 1998 when the site first met standards. Score of 81, PFC or Proper Functioning Condition. Square Creek.





R-2 in 1996 when the initial riparian survey was done. Score of 67, Functional-at-risk, static trend. Timber Creek.





R-2 taken in 2002. Score of 80, PFC or Proper Functioning Condition. Timber Creek.



Wildlife

In the original Missouri-Lonetree Management Plan all of the wildlife objectives were being met. No specific wildlife studies, except for Mountain Plover, have been completed in this watershed since that time. However, since all of the upland and riparian sites have either maintained or improved their status we believe the wildlife objectives are still being met. The Mountain Plover ACEC nomination is close to having the Record of Decision signed. When that is done the ACEC will be in place. Specific management guidelines will be part of that plan. There is a graduate student from the University of Mississippi doing part of her thesis work on plovers in the ACEC area. Data from her work will be incorporated into the ACEC management plan.

The BLM is working cooperatively with several conservation groups and the State of Montana on a Sage Grouse Conservation Plan. As part of that effort the BLM has completed some sage grouse habitat assessments using guidance from the draft plan. When the Missouri-Lonetree Watershed Evaluation is done it will include assessments of key habitat areas for sage grouse.

Range Improvements

All of the water developments that were planned in the Missouri-Lonetree Watershed Plan have been completed. The Willow Creek riparian fence, the North Fork Willow riparian fence, and the Upper Larb riparian fences have all been completed. The first phase of the Timber Creek electric fence has been completed and phase II is scheduled for the summer of 2003. The Stebley pipeline has also been completed.

The T.C Access road is scheduled for an upgrade, funding permitting, in 2005. All the culverts will be replaced, the road will be graded to a uniform width and some minor straightening will take place. The Cactus Flat road is scheduled for planning for an upgrade in the future as well. The planking on the Willow Creek Bridge may be replaced when the T.C. Access road is upgraded.

Some of the old hazard class detention reservoirs in this watershed are scheduled for abandonment and/or breaching. A few that are still in good shape and with values such as aiding in keeping the major roads from washing out or that are major access routes will be maintained and repaired as needed. The complete list of reservoirs, and whether they will be maintained or decommissioned, follows.

Dam	Maintain	Decommission	Remarks
VR-77	x		Inventory 2002, good condition
Big Rock		x	

VR-14	x		Repaired in 03, co-op with FW&Ps
ULT	x		Access and riparian values, good condition
Upper LoneTree		x	
Brazil Divide		x	Washed out, Pick up pipe
Beaverette		x	Considered repair, but nixed due to mountain plover.
NW Burnett		x	
Hamms	x		waterfowl, access values
North Beaver		x	
Badger	x		? values
Judy	x		access values
January	x		waterfowl, access values
Deep Cut	x		access values
Blanchard	x		waterfowl values
Jim	x		waterfowl, downstream riparian values
White Rock		x	
Dog Creek		x	
Bomber	x		protect county road
Rinnie		x	
Archambeau	x		waterfowl, county road
Skeeter	x		??value
Target	x		protect county road
Gravel Hill		x	
Skull		x	
Your Name		x	
Cottonwood		x	
Tin Roof		x	

One Fork		x	
Sheepshed	x		plug lower, main pipe, allow to flow through upper pipe.
Camp	x		protect county road
Desert		x	abandon easement, offer to landowner
Mudpot		x	
Short Creek		x	provide a stream crossing
Chico Flats	x		county road protection
Cactus Flat		x	
Itchiana	x		access, waterfowl, stockwater values
Arrambide	x		repaired 03, access, waterfowl, stockwater
Browning	x		county road protection
Double Crossing		x	consider a culvert to provide access and maintain fence.
Twin Forks		x	
Bloomington	x		Stockwater, waterfowl
Cornwell			Privately owned, breached, owner likely will not fix due to required BLM design (cost).
Big Forks		x	
Tuff	x		good condition
VR-2	x		fixed in 03
Grub	x		fixed in 02
Upper Southfork	x`		stockwater, waterfowl no repair needed
Bend		x	
Horny		x	
South Beaver	x		in good shape, provides access and riparian/wetland values
McNab	x		

Conclusion

The system of permittee monitoring augmented by BLM monitoring has worked well. All of the allotments have improved riparian conditions and at least maintained the other standards. There have been no problems as a result of increasing permittee flexibility to modify move schedules within the framework of their term permits. We recommend this type of agreement between the BLM and permittees be implemented in other areas.

Consultation, Cooperation and Coordination all for the sake of Conservation is a tradition and work practice that continues to result in successes in our public land management.